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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ISLAMABAD 004107

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SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH PAKISTAN'S
INTERIOR MINISTER SHERPAO

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Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On September 13, Deputy Secretary Negroponte met with Minister of Interior Sherpao. Sherpao praised the recent jirgas with Afghanistan and said Pakistan would move quickly to appoint its follow up team. Sherpao briefed the participants on the ongoing efforts by both the Pakistani military and the Interior Ministry to "pressurize" Al-Qaeda and their supporters in the border areas. Pakistan is trying to build up rapidly its local security forces in border areas. End Summary.

COUNTERING MILITANTS IN THE TRIBAL AREAS

¶2. (C) At a meeting also attended by Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher, Coordinator for Counterterrorism Ambassador Dailey, and Pakistan's Secretary of the Interior Ch. Zafar Warraich, Sherpao explained that since September 11, 2001 Pakistan has been focused on fighting terrorism in Pakistan, with special attention on the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. He understood that Al-Qaeda leaders had come to Pakistan and even been caught near Islamabad. However, Sherpao emphasized that the problem was more complex than simple terrorism. Disparate groups such as Al-Qaeda, Taliban militants, and sectarian militants all operated separately but had various connections with each other. Sherpao noted that these groups exploit every political event, such as the Red Mosque incident, to unleash more terrorism in the country.

¶3. (C) Sherpao noted that the military operations over the last few years have marginalized al-Qaeda as an organization in Pakistan. However, this did not mean that terrorism was eliminated. The militants still exist in small independent groups with their own leaders, sometimes working in concert with other independent groups. Their influence in certain parts of the Tribal Areas has grown and they have engulfed the local populations. The violence is starting to spread into the settled districts of the Northwest Frontier Province.

¶4. (C) In response to the violence, the Pakistan military and security forces have conducted over 80 major operations

and many small scale ones, according to Sherpao. He stressed that the resolve to fight terrorism in all forms will continue. Minister Sherpao said that since the breakdown of the North Waziristan agreement there have been more operations in that area that have killed over 1000 militants, and 100 security forces have lost their lives.

¶15. (C) Minister Sherpao explained that after the North Waziristan agreement there had been an increase in criminal activity because the checkposts had been abandoned. Therefore, the agreement has been abandoned, and the military has come back to the checkposts and increased scrimmages with militants and criminals. Sherpao stressed that there are currently more than 100,000 troops and security forces in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

¶16. (C) The major players in the militancy include Baitullah Mehsud, who Sherpao said was behind the suicide bombings in Islamabad and the kidnapping of troops in South Waziristan. He said militant leaders like Mehsud had increasingly become brazen in their activities in South and North Waziristan. Sherpao said that all the agreements with the militants had been abolished and now the government was putting the maximum pressure on militant Taliban. He said that in the future there would be no agreements with the militants, only undertakings. The government will keep increased pressure on the militants, and only alleviate the pressure when they undertake to stop all subversive, violent, or cross-border activities. Sherpao said that the government has identified all the local Taliban leaders and troops are focusing on them. Some of these militant leaders have a nexus with the Taliban in Afghanistan, while others are concentrating on Pakistan.

TALIBANIZATION: SPREADING TO THE SETTLED AREAS

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¶17. (C) Minister Sherpao discussed the increased suicide bombings and violence that is spreading to the settled districts of the Northwest Frontier Province. He said that the militants used the Red Mosque incident as a catalyst to increase violence. In addition to violence, there was also growing Talibanization in the Province. Sherpao used the example of Swat, a settled district where the situation was deteriorating sharply. CD shops in Swat had been bombed, notices had been given to barbers to not shave men's beards, warnings had been issued to schools to close down. He cited a very prominent 50-year old boys' school that had just shut down in Swat under pressure from extremists.

¶18. (C) Sherpao stressed that the Taliban influence has engulfed all of the Northwest Frontier and is evident even in the central districts of the province. In his opinion, the unfortunate fact that the provincial government of the NWFP was controlled by the religious parties alliance has allowed the Talibanization to spread further. The Government of Pakistan has asked the Provincial government to stop the extremist pressure, but the provincial government has been unable or unwilling to respond effectively. Sherpao described widespread harassment of local and international NGOs, schools, barbers, CD shops, journalists, and politicians.

¶19. (C) Minister Sherpao said that in his briefing to the National Security Council, serious decisions were taken to help curb Talibanization.

--All political parties should unite against terrorism and extremism at the district level. The political parties should mobilize public participation in the active condemnation and then the public will be able to put pressure on the local Taliban.

--Establish small jirgas under local political authorities

that seek religious edicts against terrorism. The jirgas would then do outreach to local populations with these edicts.

--Coordinate intelligence agencies' activities with provincial governments.

--Provide provincial governments with lists of madrassas preaching extremism in each local area so that pressure can be applied at a local level.

--Increase the police force by 50,000, with half of the budget coming from the federal government.

--Provide more equipment and training to the Frontier police, Frontier Constabulary, and Frontier Corps.

SECURITY FORCES: INCREASING STRENGTH & CAPACITY

¶10. (C) Minister Sherpao said that the increased military presence in the FATA has significantly decreased cross-border movement. He said that the security forces will continue to focus of militant ring leaders until they are eliminated. However, the Northwest Frontier Province does not have enough police forces to maintain law and order. Due to the shortfall, the army has moved in to give them support. Sherpao said that as soon as the security forces increase in strength and capacity, the Army will be able to leave.

¶11. (C) Minister Sherpao outlined the details for increasing the strength of the various paramilitary and police forces under the control of the Ministry of Interior. By January 2008, he forecasted a marked increase in the recruitment and training of Frontier Corps, Frontier Constabulary, and local police. An additional 2,000 Frontier Constabulary forces would be positioned on the border between the Tribal Areas and the settled districts to prevent militant incursions. The plan remains to squeeze the militants into a bounded area and then either apprehend or eliminate them.

¶12. (C) Sherpao reiterated the importance of the paramilitary

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forces, such as the Frontier Corps, because their strength came from their position as Pashtuns. The Army was viewed as outsiders, but the Frontier Corps was fighting militants amongst their own people. Thus they were more effective and could gain the support of local tribes.

PAK-AFGHAN JIRGA: A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

13.(C) Minister Sherpao and the Deputy Secretary discussed the recent Peace Jirga between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The main idea was to increase people to people contact between Pakistanis and Afghans. The jirga covered counterterrorism, extremism, narcotics, cross-border movements, and trade. Sherpao said that initially the Pakistanis were apprehensive that the jirga would become a forum for the Afghans to blame Pakistan for all their problems. Also Sherpao cited the initial setbacks before the jirga, including the decisions of the religious parties not to participate and the last minute pull-out of the elders from North and South Waziristan due to militant pressure.

¶14. (C) The surprisingly successful jirga left the Pakistani delegation with hope and Sherpao said that he was very proud to lead the delegation. President Musharraf's participation on the last day of the jirga increased the goodwill and changed the whole atmosphere of the jirga. Also since the conclusion, there have been no critical Afghan public statements about the Pakistan, which Sherpao said was a positive result of the jirga. Both Pakistan and Afghanistan are very focused on fighting terrorism and extremism and the jirga is a positive step in this fight.

Sherpao noted that even the religious parties were now regretting their non-participation.

¶15. (C) Sherpao said the next step will be holding a smaller 50-person jirga, with 25 representatives from each country to focus on the smaller details and implementation. The focused jirga will reach out to "reconcilable Taliban". Sherpao will be meeting with his Afghan counterpart to discuss the participants of the smaller implementation jirga to make sure they are compatible and also that they command respect and can enforce the agreements. Sherpao noted that even the feedback from the Taliban has not been bad, with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's people saying that if certain conditions were met they would be willing to talk to the jirga.

¶16. (C) Sherpao noted that this was just a beginning in the fight against militants. For terrorists the GOP would continue to use force, but to fight extremism they would use long-term solutions and try to talk with the involved parties. He saw sub-jirgas at the border as one solution that would have local tribes enforcing border security agreements. Sherpao also mentioned the importance of the jirga's focus of narcotics because so much of terrorist funding was coming from drug barons.

BORDER SECURITY MANAGEMENT

¶17. (C) The Secretary of the Interior Ch. Zafar Warraich briefed the meeting on Pakistan's efforts to secure its 2,400 km border with Afghanistan. He described the more than 1,000 border checkposts in Balochistan and the NWFP. Additionally the Pakistanis were starting to use biometrics to identify people crossing the border. Warraich cited that Afghanistan only had 100 checkposts. The Pakistanis would like Afghanistan to increase its checkposts and also was willing to share their biometric technology and data to better secure both sides of the border. Border crossings, such as the one at Chaman, were now using biometric cards to retain data about frequent crossers, including those people from tribes that were on both sides of the border. Three more biometric checkposts were going to be installed in Baluchistan and one in the Northwest Frontier at Torkham.

¶18. (C) Warraich cited the constant Afghan Government complaints about Afghan Taliban seeking medical attention in Balochistan. In response, the Pakistani Government used the

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biometric data to scan hospitals and they subsequently caught about 500 militants. Of these, 300 have been turned over to Afghanistan, and about 180 are still being interrogated. Pakistan also addressed the complaints by starting to close the refugee camps where many Afghan Taliban seek sanctuary. Secretary Warraich thanked the United States for its

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assistance in building a Levy training center and also in increasing the Frontier Corps. These increased security forces would be effective in manning the border and stopping cross-border incursions.

¶19. (C) Both Sherpao and Warraich ended by stressing the importance of U.S. assistance for the Tribal Areas, legislation for Reconstruction Opportunity Zones, and resources for the Frontier Corps. They said the long-term solution for extremism was to provide these tribesmen employment, education, and economic activity.

¶20. (U) The Deputy Secretary's staff has cleared this message.

PATTERSON